

Dr Suresh Renukappa – Written Evidence (LBC0027)

Women at Workplace after COVID-19 crisis

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Executive summary

COVID-19 has widely affected the women's labour market. Semi-structured interviews were used on five professional women across five different companies. These women held varying positions within their companies. Interviewees were asked, "how has COVID-19 affected them and their career and what can the government do to improve this"? The findings reveal that there are two main issues considered beyond COVID-19 in the workplace is the mental health issues of women and childcare facilities when employers provided the option to work from home.

Evidence

Participant No.	Current work position	How has Covid-19 affected you and your career?	What can the government do to improve this?
1	Quit work	Having to quit work increased, burdens at home, has affected my mental stability, and has affected my career options, as job markets are limited. I had to leave work due to no childcare options as schools closed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government need to provide bursaries for women who support their families and have lost their jobs or have no other choice but to leave due to no childcare options.• Government also need to provide better childcare services.
2	Sent home from work due to health issues.	I am shielded from my work, due to the nature of my work it was a risk to my health, which meant I had to isolate from family and friends, which meant I was heavily reliant on family to get essentials. This had affected my mental health, as I was not able to go outside to see any	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government to give better guidance and updates for shielded employees.• Better childcare services.• Give bursary for that financial loss or possibly reduce the income tax following the next financial year.

		family or friends. There is immense pressure in cooking and more food shopping.	
3	Work from Home	COVID-19 has had drastic effect on me. I am pregnant and I am working from home, I feel under pressure that I may not have a job once I have finished from my maternity leave. Working as a manager I feel like this will hinder my career. With further pressures from looking after my children and preparing for my next child, there is also an added pressure from maintaining workload from work, and making sure I do enough, I also have to do a handover virtually which is difficult, as not everything can be explained thoroughly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government need to set clear guidelines and procedures in place to ensure people like me have a job to go back too. • There needs to be financial bursaries for those working women who require childcare when schools are shut down. • In addition, there has been a lot of pressure and anxiety on my husband, which has further affected my mental state. It would be great if there were a service that could help me through this current period.
4	Redundant	I was made redundant as the company was struggling financially. COVID-19 has affected my career progressions, I also have financial responsibilities, so it has affected my mental health, and added further pressure to find a job amongst these difficult times during this pandemic. In addition, as I had long term career progressions to become a chartered engineer, this redundancy has set me back to achieve this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like the government to acknowledge that COVID-19 is affecting women's career progressions that we have worked hard for and is setting women back years of all the work we have put in to get to the positions that we are working. • There needs to be financial aid for those who have lost their jobs, and especially for women who have that added pressure and burden to look after the house, and children. • There needs to be transparency within the gender pay, and more women have lost their jobs and government need to acknowledge that is a big problem that

			needs to be addressed.
5	Working from home	<p>Working from home for first time, company is over 1000 employees most of whom are working from home. There have been many difficulties with everyone logging onto the system at peak times.</p> <p>Due to furlough, there is higher amount of work and pressure to pick up workload from those are furloughed. Lack of motivation. Having to deal with handover virtually is difficult through this pandemic. In addition, I have a toddler at home, so on top of the workload, I work from 8am-2pm, due to the crisis, and I could not put my child into childcare. I do not only have to deal with pressure from work but look after my child. This has put a strain on my household and has affected my mental health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be great if government could provide me with assurance of job security, as being pregnant I am anxious about being made possibly redundant, as I know this pandemic has had a huge financial impact on the economy. • It would be great if there was financial help offered from the government, and further childcare and mental health services through this difficult time.

Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, companies and the government do have regulations and procedures already in place if there is a huge problem, so that a short-term assistance can be provided for the employees. However, it does not cover the issues that have risen from this global pandemic of COVID-19. After experiencing this pandemic, the government needs to put procedures and legislations in place to further support women and their careers. There needs to be long term strategies, which will not only allow the companies to efficiently adapt to the changes, but support employees and prioritises their welfare; especially in terms of mental health and child care facilities.

The following improvement and recommendations which needs to be brought to the government's attention in regard to the women's workforce to help both employers and employees to accustom to during this coronavirus pandemic but also life beyond COVID-19.

- If companies encourage remote working, this needs to be done in an efficient and safe manner. Women who are working remotely and looking after children need to be careful, and companies need to ensure they have the equipment set up safely so that it's not a hazard for the child, i.e. trip over wires, workstations etc.
- If furloughed companies need to take into consideration that women will have children at home, as schools are shut, so there are very limited childcare services available. From participant 5, revealed that employees are under further pressure due to furloughed staff. There needs to be a system in place, if companies are furloughing staff, the workload needs to be spread evenly as possible. In addition, as women are more likely to take care of the children than men, whilst working from home too, some women are more likely to lose their jobs or become furloughed. There need to be more support systems in place, and better childcare services if schools are shut down. Participant 1 had to leave the company due to no childcare options being available. The government need to make better childcare services available for women in vulnerable positions.
- Mental Health services need to be available, as over 80% participants mentioned that this pandemic has affected their mental health. The government and companies need to work together to provide mental health aid to employees, especially women who are dealing with the extra burden of childcare and domestic responsibilities, alongside work. Moreover, with domestic violence cases on a surge, this needs to be a priority for the government that there is a service where people can go for help.

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